

**Governor's Rural Affairs Council  
Meeting Minutes – May 2, 2018**

1. **The meeting was called to order by Lt. Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti at 1:00 pm.** Lt. Governor announced that if members of the public are in attendance, and are interested in providing remarks to the council, they should please sign in with Susan Bence.

2. **Roll Call**

**Member Agencies Present:**

Illinois Department of Aging, Leann Dolan  
Illinois Department of Agriculture, Rebecca Clark (phone)  
Illinois Department of Employment Security, Shelly Tweedy  
Illinois Department of Employment Security, Jeff Fulgenzi  
Illinois Department of Public Health, Don Jones  
Illinois Department of Transportation, Holly Ostdick  
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Amy Walkenbach  
Illinois Community College Board, LaVonne Nelson  
University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service, Anne Silvis  
Illinois Housing Development Authority, Ben Fenton (phone)  
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, Christopher Merrett  
Illinois State Board of Education, Colin Hitt  
Rural Partners, Blanche Shoup

Not Present: Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Illinois Department of Human Services, Illinois Farm Bureau, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Southern Illinois University, Illinois Finance Authority

**Citizen Members Present:**

Luke Allen  
Heather Hampton Knodle  
Sonja Reece  
Larry Richards

**Nonvoting Members Present:**

Kate O'Hare, USDA  
Norman Walzer, NIU

**Lt. Governor's Office Present:**

Evelyn Sanguinetti  
Derek Cantu  
Susan Wynn Bence  
Brian Costin

**Quorum determined.**

### **3. Opening Remarks**

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti welcomed everyone to the quarterly meeting of the Governor's Rural Affairs Council. She expressed her excitement to be able to work with so many supporters of innovative rural development initiatives to improve the quality of life in rural Illinois. She mentioned that she had recently joined Governor Rauner to outline our administrations priorities for the remainder of the legislative session. She stated that priorities include: balancing the budget, pass the Citizens Empowerment Act, limit opioid prescriptions, and Industrial Hemp Legislation.

### **4. Approval of Meeting Minutes from March 8, 2018.**

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti announced that a draft of the minutes from the March meeting had been provided to council members prior to today's meeting along with a hard copy today. She inquired if there were any corrections to the minutes. Since there were no corrections, she requested a motion to approve the minutes. Sonja Reece made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Luke Allen. Motion passed. Minutes were approved.

### **5. Approval of Working Group Meeting Minutes**

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti inquired if there were any corrections to the working group minutes. Since there were no corrections, she requested a motion to approve the minutes. Sonja Reece made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by LaVon Nelson. Motion passed. Minutes were approved.

### **6. Stuart Layne, Executive Director of the Illinois Bicentennial Commission**

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti introduced Stuart Layne. She explained that Stuart is a strategic marketing and communication executive with decades of high profile media and sports marketing experience.

Stuart thanked the Lt. Governor for the opportunity to speak to the GRAC. He presented a short PowerPoint on the events and activities that will promote the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Illinois becoming a state. A birthday party will be held at the United Center on December 3, 2018. For more info, please visit [www.Illinois200.com](http://www.Illinois200.com)

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti thanked Stuart for his comments. She asked if there were any follow up questions. Since there were none, the Lt. Governor introduced the next speaker.

### **7. Luke Sailer, Illinois State Fair Manager**

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti introduced the recently appointed Division Manager of Fair and Promotional Services, Luke Sailer. His position will be to oversee the bureaus of the Illinois State Fair, Du Quion State Fair, Businesses Services and County Fairs & Horse Racing.

Luke announced this year is the 166<sup>th</sup> state fair. He mentioned that along with promoting the fairs, his office is also promoting the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Illinois. Luke proceeded to announce some of the upcoming events and programs at both fairs.

The Lt. Governor thanked Luke for his presentation.

**8. Kaitlin Wilhite, Assistant Legislative Liaison Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity.**

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti introduced Kaitlin Wilhite to the GRAC. She mentioned that Kaitlin used to work in her office and help with the GRAC meetings. She explained that Kaitlin was going to speak about legislation that is working its way through the process that will effect rural Illinois.

Kaitlin referred to the handouts that she had previously passed out. She provided a snapshot of Advantage IL and briefly explained how the program worked and how it correlates to rural Illinois. She also mentioned House Bill 5214 and Senate Bill 3302. These bills will help “clean up” the Angel Tax Credit so that it is more useable for rural areas.

Kaitlin explained that Senate Bill 2667 refers to the Enterprise Zone to help boost rural economy. This bill will help rural areas compete on a level playing field with urban areas.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti asked if there were any follow up questions.

Heather Hampton Knodle asked if there were employment minimums for the Enterprise Zone. She also asked if restaurants are included as an option in the Advantage IL Program. Alternatively, cooperatives?

Kaitlin explained that she is not aware if employment minimums were included, but she will check and let Heather know. As for the Advantage IL questions, Kaitlin explained she is only speaking about the loan programs. There are different levels and brackets for these loans.

Susan Wynn Bence asked when a loan is made is the lender a local bank where DCEO guarantees the loan.

Kaitlin explained that DCEO is working with banks and helps coordinate the process.

The Lt. Governor thanked Kaitlin for sharing her info.

**9. Annual Report Discussion – Chris Merrett**

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti explained that the GRAC has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs to expand the GRAC’s research relationship with Chris Merrett and his team at WIU. She further explained that Chris continues to organize a detailed analysis of rural health, rural elementary and secondary education, rural workforce development, and rural economic development for the annual report. These reports help ensure that the GRAC is providing a data driven report to help with recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly. She requested that Chris provide an update.

Chris Merrett explained that at least five agencies have submitted reports. He requested that all agencies submit their report by June 1, 2018. He is planning on having a draft of the report prepared by July 18 for the next GRAC meeting. The final report is due August 1, 2018.

The Lt. Governor thanked Chris for his report and reminded all the deadline is June 1<sup>st</sup> to have your reports to Chris.

## **10. Working Group Summaries**

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti stated that “Rural Affairs” provides an endless opportunity to dive deeper into issues affecting Illinois rural communities. To address these issues, the GRAC has identified four main focus areas for which working groups were created to develop strategies and goals. The working groups include:

- Health – Co-Chaired by Sonja Reece and Larry Richards
- Workforce Development – Co-Chaired by Norm Walzer and Doug Hanks
- Economic Development – Co-Chaired by Todd Kaeb and Heather Hampton Knodle
- Education – Co-Chaired by Lucas Allen and Chris Merrett

The Lt. Governor reminded everyone if they are new to the GRAC, please see Brian Costin so that you can be assigned to a group. She announced that one group has met since our last meeting. She requested that the education working group provide an update at this time.

Lucas Allen reported that the group has contacted the State Board of Education and Nutrition to see what resources are available and to see what type of help the GRAC might be able to supply. This would include the current breakfast, lunch, and summer programs.

Luke also noted that Ag classrooms are starting to grow food for needy families in their school district. The produce is donated to local food pantries. An example of this program is the Streator School District.

The working group is also discussing ideas on how to provide grant accountability as a statewide initiative. Such as, what can be done to simplify grant reporting?

Luke mentioned that there are 3 virtual Ag classes offered statewide for next year. The group is hopefully to reach more students about career opportunities in agriculture. This can be accomplished by reaching schools who currently do not have any Ag program and/or classes. The goal is to have 12 new programs for next year.

Luke stated that another initiative is to investigate the grant process so that Ag teachers could be employed year round to teach leadership/entrepreneur skills. Currently only 40% of schools have teachers employed year round to teach leadership.

The Lt. Governor thanked the education working group and asked if there were any questions or comments.

Sonja Reece noted that the hospital/clinics are hosting gardens where the staff take care of the garden, but the food is distributed through the clinic.

Shelly Tweedy asked what Ag classes are being offered virtually?

Luke stated the classes are: Intro to Ag, Ag Science, and Vet Science.

## **11. New Business**

The Lt. Governor announced the following dates for the 2018 GRAC meetings:

- a. 7/18/18 – Springfield – location to be announced
- b. 12/5/18 – TBA

Calendar items:

- a. Illinois State Fair – August 9-19, 2018
- b. DuQuoin State Fair – August 24 – September 3, 2018
- c. Farm Progress Show – August 28-30, 2018

## **12. Member Updates and Reports**

Blanche Shoup stated that Rural Partners will be meeting next week. She explained in 2019, RP will host the national meeting for the Partners for Rural America (PRA). The PRA is a national organization comprised of State Rural Development Councils (SRDCs) such as Rural Partners, founded in 1998 originally supported by the USDA. There are currently 22 state members, including Illinois Rural Partners, in the PRA.

Kate O'Hare (on behalf of Doug Wilson) said that the USDA is making opioid addiction a priority. She also announced that there is \$5 million being reserved to fund innovate projects. She also mentioned there is funding available for distance learning and the tele-medicine program. Kate announced that the USDA has held 4 listening sessions to discuss opioid addiction. She also mentioned the IIRA Rural Reverse Funding Fairs that have been taking place.

Leann Dolan provided info about the Seniors Farmers Market that are taking place in 35 counties. Also, the home delivered meals. She stated her department is working to expand services.

LaVonne Nelson noted that her agency completed adult education literacy plans. They plan to extend and expand services to reach those needing a GED or Industrial Certificate.

Heather Hampton Knodle asked if partnerships could be coordinated for resources through community colleges to offer training programs. Lavon will provide information for Heather.

Derek Cantu said that he is starting to receive data for the pilot program for AP courses in rural high school districts. These include both virtual and regular AP classes. Students are completing a survey about whether the online or classroom classes worked better. He will share results at upcoming GRAC meetings.

Norm Walzer stated that he is currently writing a policy profile about population loss. He explained that the problem is less population overall and how to continue to support businesses.

The profile will address issues such as the aging rural Illinois population, succession planning for small businesses, incentives for people to move to Illinois, ways to keep seniors employed longer, and how to reduce local governments.

Heather asked if there were guidelines that could be used as a handout for the Legal frameworks for succession planning. Norm explained that there are programs that find someone to take over the business and help with loans. Heather asked what resources, programs, “how to guides.” Norm stated there is not a consistent guide, but these guides are needed.

Heather Hampton Knodle highlighted the Montgomery Trade Show. She also mentioned the Agri Women event, which will be November 15 in Springfield. She provided an update about the fiber optic in Montgomery County.

Luke Allen remind everyone about the Illinois FFA Conference in Springfield on June 12-14.

Sonja Reece thanked Susan and her staff for drafting excellent legislation for the tele-medicine and opioid control. She mentioned that there is a need for nurse practitioners to have admitting privileges to hospitals. Sonja mentioned the growing problem with marketers targeting 8<sup>th</sup> grade and younger for the E-cigarettes and vaping.

Larry Richards thanked Susan Wynn Bence for her service to the GRAC and said that all will miss her.

Don Jones announced on June 27<sup>th</sup> there will Opioid Crisis provided by the Department of Health. He explained the focus will be on training for Narcon administration. He explained that the department was also providing grant funds to help communities to obtain Narcon.

Heather asked if there was a snapshot of the pattern by geographic area. Don stated it was evenly dispersed. The Lt. Governor mentioned this data was in last year’s GRAC report.

The Lt. Governor noted that there is \$40 million from the federal government to help with the opioid crisis with another \$16 million available in the future.

Jeff Fulgenzi announced their systems are being updated. This will allow online access for business owners to see their data online. This will also provide assistance to business for training as well as working with unemployed and underemployed. He stated that the IL Job Link matches businesses to individuals. The wage database will help provide data to guidance counselors, businesses, etc. which will include all industry classes.

Anne Heinze Silvis provided an overview of extension services.

Holly Ostlick provided a brief update on the freight program.

Ben Fenton stated the Housing Development Authority is accepting applications for special needs and support housing for families. Please see their website for more info. All the 2018 awards for Low Income Tax Program will be announced in the next few weeks.

The Lt. Governor announced that a tele-health working group has been started with the first meeting on May 9, 2018.

The Lt. Governor thanked everyone for their comments and updates. She issued a special thank you to Susan Wynn Bence for her work during the last four years. She wished Susan luck with her new position. A round of applause was given for Susan with several members stating “thank you.”

### **13. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

### **14. Adjournment**

The Lt. Governor thanked everyone for their time and dedication. As a reminder if you wish to be on the agenda for future meetings, please contact Brian Costin.

Sonja Reece made a motion to adjourn. Heather Hampton Knodle seconded the motion. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.

### **Respectfully Submitted:**

Chris Merrett  
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs  
Western Illinois University